



One of the great challenges for teachers today is that we disagree with our students on what will cause them to flourish. Contentment vs. entitlement. Authority vs. freedom. Other-centeredness vs. self-centeredness.

Why are students' needs and beliefs so different from ours? Would you be surprised to learn that the use of technology is largely responsible?

Many of our students have internalized five lies from their use of technology. You've probably seen these lies in action through students' beliefs and behaviors. There are many practical ways to combat the lies in our students' minds, freeing them to honor God and others.

Lie #1: I am the center of my own universe.

Social media can cause students to believe this lie. If they're old enough to post, they'll watch to see how many Likes they get, whether their post is shared, and who comments. Many teens may ignore everyone else's posts while expecting others to pay attention to theirs. When I point this out to them, many laugh nervously.

Young people can connect to whom they want, when they want. They can buy just one song (rather than needing to buy an entire album) and they can watch whatever they want on their own handheld device. Technology bends the world to serve their every whim.

We must teach that God is the center of the universe, providing evidence from Scripture and our observations of the world. We must teach them all people have value. We must call self-centeredness sin and teach children how to be other-centered. (Notice that I said "teach"—not "tell them.")

Lie #2: I deserve to be happy all the time.

Technology has taught children there are no obstacles to their happiness that cannot be removed. Nothing ever really breaks, everything should be easy, and they can always get a higher score on a game.

Don't get me wrong. I don't want students to be unhappy. But they must understand happiness isn't guaranteed.

Because technology makes things easier, students may struggle to persevere. To offset this, we can circulate

more to encourage students during the learning process and check often on their progress when assigning long-term projects.

We must prioritize joy over happiness, contentment over entitlement, and effort over laziness. We must allow them to suffer consequences rather than rescuing them from all hardships. We must model and teach emotional resilience so they can persevere when they make mistakes or don't get their way immediately. We can model and teach the difference between wanting something and needing something. We can model our dependence on God and cultivate thankfulness.

We can also teach them how to wait well—how to daydream and find something productive to do. Teaching them how and why to wait on God might be among the most important things we do. It doesn't come naturally to them.

Lie #3: I must have choices.

Between websites, television channels, movies, apps, and every other available option, our students' brains are wired to expect choice. They think it's their right.

More than ever before, students ask for changes to deadlines, the length of papers, topics they can write about, and more. We can provide small choices: blue ink or black, cursive or printed, write about an inventor or explorer. But they should understand some things are nonnegotiable.

Let's model and explain better standards than happiness, especially when making important decisions. Students will benefit from being taught about decision making, cause/effect thinking, and how to handle the fallout of unwise choices.

Lie #4: I am my own authority.

As with the other lies, there are several causes for this one. For example, there's no clear standard of right and wrong in our culture. This confuses children. Sadly, in too many homes, parents aren't parenting and many kids are making their own decisions.

The few authority figures depicted on television and film are often out-of-touch and clueless. This is especially true for traditional family authority figures like dads. Authority figures from government, schools, and the church have failed us.

We must help students see that God's boundaries are because of His love for us and that His authority is designed to protect us. We must help them learn to hear

and respond to God's voice. We must be wise and godly authorities. This can include apologizing when we make mistakes, providing regular feedback to motivate them to stay on course, and teaching with truth rather than sharing advice and opinions.

Lie #5: I don't need teachers; I have information.

Students may dismiss us because they think information is all they need, and they can get that on their own. Ten seconds on a search engine can provide them all they want to know on almost any subject. What can we offer them?

Our power comes in teaching them how to sift, sort, synthesize, and share information. What's accurate? complete? biblically sound? healthy? unbiased? What other standards should we use?

Once they choose what information to keep, how do they synthesize it all—so that the story from a blog, data from their textbook, and a conversation with their dad all work together? How do ideas influence other ideas? How can someone form conclusions and learn to ask compelling questions? And, even though they think they're the center of the universe, how and why might they want to share what they know with others? They need us!

They also need us because we can help them understand the differences between information, knowledge, and wisdom. God wants us to ask for wisdom (James 1:5). We're not taught to ask Him for information. And we know that wisdom blesses us (Proverbs 3:13). Let's model this.

It Starts with Us

Have you seen yourself in these lies? It's not uncommon. This vulnerability can increase our compassion for our students. When we work to make changes in our own lives, we'll have credibility when approaching them about theirs. Truth will win!

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For more recommendations on combating technology's lies, readers may refer to Kathy's new book, *Screens and Teens: Connecting with Our Kids in a Wireless World*.